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PRESS RELEASE – DECEMBER 11, 2014

Man is sentenced to life in prison for murder after being on the run for over a decade

GALVESTON- Jose Pablo Lopez was sentenced today for the offense of Capital Murder. A jury convicted the 40-year-old man for murdering Mario Espinosa the evening after Father's Day in June of 2001. Lopez remained a fugitive from justice for over a decade, until he was arrested in Mexico in June 2012. After a lengthy extradition process, the Galveston District Attorney's Office, working with the FBI and Department of Justice, was able to get him to Galveston County in March of this year.

Prosecutors Kevin Petroff and Kayla Allen argued to the jury that Lopez had promised to pay his co-defendants, Jose Badillo and Ramiro Baltazar, \$10,000 for the murder of Mario Espinosa. Badillo and Baltazar both pled guilty to the murder in 2001, each receiving a sentence of forty (40) years in TDCJ. Witnesses testified that Lopez was angry with Espinosa over a woman that had dated both men. Espinosa was the father of one of Lopez's girlfriend's children, and he had been granted custody of the child just two weeks before the murder. Former Galveston Police Detective Cody Cazalas testified that within forty-eight (48) hours of the murder, police were able to identify the two shooters, Lopez, and another co-Defendant, Elisandro Salinas, who is still a wanted fugitive.

Espinosa's son, who witnessed the murder when he was just three (3) years-old, gave a victim impact statement to the defendant after the Court sentenced him to Capital Life. Under the 2001 law, Lopez will be eligible for parole after forty (40) years.

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